

# **The Common European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP)**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreward	v
Executive Summary	vii
Acknowledgements	x
Introduction	1
Country Perspectives	4
-1999: A Busy Year for the EU	4
-The United Kingdom	6
-France	8
-Germany	9
-The United States	12
Challenges toESDP—the Road Ahead	15
-Psychological Dimension	15
-The Focus on Capabilities	18
-Institution Building	25
US Policy Recommendations	30
-Force Structure Implications	33
Conclusion	36
Endnotes	38

## FOREWORD

We are pleased to publish this forty-first volume in the *Occasional Paper* series of the United States Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). As the United States continues to adjust to its role in the post-Cold War world, the transatlantic partnership remains fundamental to US security concerns. Commander Gunning's paper is a wake-up call suggesting that Europe is concerned about US intransigence when it comes the security partnership with Europe. While the United States has often encouraged the Europeans to improve capabilities and take on a greater share of the defensive burden, their recent efforts to do so have often been viewed as paradoxical to US concerns. Policymakers on this side of the Atlantic worry that Europe in some ways is moving towards going it alone with the development of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). Still, US desires for increased burdensharing need to be reconciled with ESDP. Commander Gunning highlights these differences and spells out how, in his opinion, it is possible for the United States to remain engaged in Europe and to allow the European Union to develop its own defense identity. The differences of opinion between the two sides are more "speed bumps" than "road blocks" and some disagreement and frustration is to be expected. The conclusion here is that security interests on both sides of the Atlantic will be served in the long run by encouraging the development of a more autonomous European defense capability and through American patience as that process unfolds.

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JAMES M. SMITH  
Director

# **THE COMMON EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY (ESDP)**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

One clear outcome of the Kosovo conflict was a realization on the part of several leaders of the European Union (EU) that the EU's current military capabilities are inadequate. Kosovo highlighted the EU's inability to address crises in its own back yard. The United States bore the brunt of the air war against Serbian forces, notably in the areas of: (1) all weather delivery of precision guided munitions; (2) electronic warfare support and attack; (3) aerial refueling; (4) strategic lift; and (5) Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR). Although European nations are providing most of the current ground units in Kosovo, European militaries are stretched to the limit to meet these requirements while deploying only two percent of their total forces. As the European Union moves forward with its integration, many EU leaders are focusing on the requirement to develop more autonomous defense capabilities to support the development of their Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

In December 1999 at Helsinki the European Council decided to develop the EU's crisis management capability with the commitment to build a force of 60,000 troops capable of out-of-area operations before 2003. This force is designed to deal with future Kosovos and provide the operational basis for the new European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP).

For ESDP to be successful it is sold as supporting a growing role for the European Union in world affairs. United States' leaders are reluctant to sacrifice their dominance of European security affairs, especially when prospects for substantive capability improvements are remote. Without US support ESDP is unlikely to succeed in the long

run, and this might entail disastrous results for the transatlantic alliance. United States leadership must delicately balance expectations at home, and allow the Europeans to slowly develop their capability and lever their initial momentum.

ESDP is a delicate balancing act for both the European Union and the United States. Its failure might damage transatlantic relations and threaten tenuous congressional support for American security burdens in Europe. Its success might raise the specter of an American withdrawal under the justification that US forces would no longer be needed in Europe. It is important for US policy and transatlantic relations as a whole that a middle ground be achieved in this effort.

More equitable transatlantic relations best serve European security interests. This will require Europeans to shake the complacency of fifty years of American dependence and move forward with substantial capability improvements. In turn, the United States will have to accept a more balanced position in the area of European security. It will be a difficult road for both sides.

In the near term, little will change with respect to US requirements in Europe. This continued burden would place a strain on ESDP development. American leaders will need to accept that ESDP is indeed a “European” development and allow it to take its course with measured support. United States relations will benefit from a stronger partner in Europe. Although it may take a decade to achieve greater capabilities, patience on the US side will reap its reward. The United States is a committed European partner. It does not have the option to withdraw from European affairs.

United States interests are best served through encouraging the development of a more autonomous European defense capability. It is unrealistic to expect the United States to continue to dominate European security efforts indefinitely. The EU nations recognize this reality and



expect greater success in their collective efforts to develop improved capabilities on the basis of European integration. A more capable European partner will provide flexibility and strength to the transatlantic security relationship. A sustainable and viable security relationship with the European Union will remain the cornerstone of US peace and stability efforts worldwide. The United States cannot withdraw from Europe and cannot expect to sustain the current imbalance with respect to security. European Union efforts to develop a more autonomous defense capability may be the best avenue to solidify the crucial transatlantic security link.

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